



Interview Summary: Interim Chief Steve Bell (Ottawa Police Service)

Interim Chief Steve Bell was interviewed by Frank Au, Mark Pritchard, Eric Brousseau, and Misha Boutilier on August 29, 2022. Questions about this summary should be directed to Frank Au.

Background

Interim Chief Bell's Background

Interim Chief Bell was appointed Interim Chief of the Ottawa Police Service (**OPS**) on February 15. Prior to being appointed as Interim Chief on February 15, 2022, Interim Chief Bell had a limited role in response to the Freedom Convoy, although he did take part in strategy discussions in relation to the management of the Convoy and was available for discussion and support to the executive team. As Interim Chief, he oversees OPS's approximately 1480 sworn members. In February 2022, OPS only had 1,155 sworn members (inclusive of all ranks) available for deployment at any given time due to sick-leave, secondment, parental leave, vacancies, WSIB, and long-term disability. Of those members, 599 were frontline officers available for operational duties. In order to supplement this number, OPS had to pull investigative officers and deploy them in an operational capacity.

Before February 15, 2022, Interim Chief Bell had served as Deputy Chief for several years. As Deputy Chief, he initially headed criminal investigations and information, next led community policing, and in 2021 began to serve as Chief Administrative Officer (**CAO**) to develop OPS's budget. In mid-December 2021, he learned that he would be reassigned from the CAO role to oversee intelligence, information, and investigations at OPS. He began that role in early January 2022 and performed it until his appointment as Interim Chief. He is experienced in providing strategic oversight of OPS operations, including operations concerning demonstrations, floods, tornados, and bus crashes.

Chief Sloly's Leadership of OPS

In fall 2019, Peter Sloly became the OPS Chief. Interim Chief Bell had been the internal OPS candidate for chief, but he was not selected. Interim Chief Bell stated that his role as Deputy Chief was to support Chief Sloly and his direction, and that he fulfilled that role. He stated that he learned from Chief Sloly's leadership styles and leadership on certain issues within OPS. He was not sure if he would characterize Chief Sloly as a mentor.

Interim Chief Bell stated that, during his tenure as Chief, Chief Sloly made it very clear that it was his responsibility to approve operational plans. Interim Chief Bell mentioned that Chief Sloly believed that he needed to sign off on every operational plan, and that he also believed that he needed to review that plan and make detailed notations to it so that he could understand what was occurring. Interim Chief Bell mentioned that Chief Sloly employed an operational plan template that included a line for his signature.



Leadership Transition and Turnover at OPS

Interim Chief Bell noted that the OPS executive experienced significant turnover during Chief Sloly's tenure. The March 2020 suspension of Deputy Chief Uday Jaswal resulted in a vacancy that was filled by Acting Deputy Chiefs rotating through the Deputy Chief position in three-months at a time. Likewise, the April 2021 cessation of employment of CAO Jeff Letourneau created a vacancy that Interim Chief Bell filled.

In addition, there was a leadership transition in the three senior officer positions with responsibility for the OPS Intelligence Directorate in early January 2022. At that time, Interim Chief Bell was assigned to oversee the Directorate, Superintendent Mark Patterson replaced Superintendent Robert Drummond as the head of the Directorate, and Inspector Kenneth Bryden became the Inspector overseeing the Directorate. Inspector Bryden reported to Superintendent Patterson, who in turn reported to Interim Chief Bell. Interim Chief Bell stated that he, Superintendent Patterson, and Inspector Bryden had experience in intelligence collection and dissemination. Staff Sergeant Stephanie Burns was the senior non-commissioned officer in the Intelligence Directorate. Sergeants and investigators responsible for tactical delivery of intelligence information reported to her.

There was significant turnover in the OPS ranks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interim Chief Bell observed that, while OPS was world-class at planning for state visits and mass events that could lead to mass protests, many OPS members experienced with policing demonstrations left the force during the pandemic. Interim Chief Bell stated that many of the younger OPS members who remained were not experienced at policing large demonstrations.

IMS and ICS Incident Command Models, CACP National Framework & Role of PLT

Interim Chief Bell is familiar with the Incident Management System (**IMS**), Incident Command System (**ICS**), and gold-silver-bronze (**GSB**) models of incident command. He completed level 100 ICS training, and became more familiar with both the IMS and ICS models through his experience delivering operations at the strategic level. The IMS model envisions a more police-oriented response, while the ICS model is generalist and allows for better partnering with other agencies. The GSB model is a British model that is employed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (**RCMP**). Interim Chief Bell noted that, while none of these three models is perfect, all three models distinguish between strategic, operational, and tactical roles. Under each model, executive-level leaders need to lead at the strategic level, operational leaders need to develop and execute plans at the operational level, and members need to execute at the tactical level.

At the time of the Freedom Convoy, Interim Chief Bell was not familiar with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police National Framework for Police Preparedness for



Demonstrations and Assemblies.¹ He stated that he was supportive of the measured approach principle that the National Framework incorporates.

Interim Chief Bell oversaw the work of OPS Police Liaison Team (**PLT**) officers in responding to large demonstrations in 2020 and 2021, including Black Lives Matter and many other demonstrations.² He credited PLT's engagement for de-escalating potential incidents at these demonstrations, and he stated that the use of PLT is critically important to planning for demonstrations, communicating with protestors, and resolving demonstrations through the lowest level of intervention possible. The role of PLT was well understood at the OPS command level at the time of the Freedom Convoy. He was not aware of any specific training for command-level OPS officers on the role of PLT before the Freedom Convoy's arrival.

Pre-Arrival Intelligence

Interim Chief Bell's Role

Interim Chief Bell learned that the Freedom Convoy would be traveling to Ottawa in mid-January 2022. Interim Chief Bell participated in daily executive command calls. In or about mid-January 2022, the subject of the Convoy was raised. As a result, Interim Chief Bell gave direction to Superintendent Patterson to gather the best, most relevant and appropriate intelligence to come up with a view on if and how it would affect Ottawa.

From approximately the middle of January to approximately January 27, 2022, Interim Chief Bell's role was one of strategic oversight. To that end he had regular discussions with Superintendent Patterson to ensure that the proper systems were in place to receive intelligence and that people were assigned to collecting and assessing that information and that the analysis would be passed on to the planning team to create an operational plan. Interim Chief Bell specifically challenged Superintendent Patterson on his view that intelligence information be kept within the Intelligence Directorate. Interim Chief Bell is a firm believer that intelligence is important information that needs to be shared. Interim Chief Bell received verbal updates and briefings from Superintendent Patterson, and in turn he briefed others on the morning command calls.

Intelligence Assessment Process & Effect of OPS's Past Experience with Protests

Shortly after January 24, OPS established a joint intelligence group (**JIG**) to support the planners. Interim Chief Bell stated that incoming information would have been fed into the

¹ COM00000666.

² OPP's Provincial Liaison Team is the equivalent of OPS's Police Liaison Team. For the purposes of this interview summary, PLT refers to either or both the OPS Police Liaison Team or the OPP Provincial Liaison Team, depending on the context.



JIG for assessment. He noted that OPS was receiving lots of information about the Freedom Convoy, and that there was wildly varying information about what would occur, for how long, and how many persons would attend.

Interim Chief Bell observed that OPS assessed intelligence and developed a plan based on OPS's past experience with demonstrations. He stated that the Freedom Convoy developed as a grassroots political movement, and that there was considerable intelligence that it would be a peaceful protest. Interim Chief Bell did not consider vehicle protests to be an anomaly or outside the norm. He noted that OPS regularly successfully manages a large number of protests annually including a truck protest and a farm vehicle protest in 2021, and that other vehicle protests had regularly appeared in Ottawa, including a 2009 protest against the Sri Lankan Civil War and 2021 protests against agricultural reforms in India and against the Tigray Region Civil War.

Interim Chief Bell saw it as OPS's role to respect lawful protests. He noted that OPS was experienced dealing with lawful protests on national and international issues and ensuring public safety at these protests. He commented that OPS's approach to protests at the time of the Freedom Convoy did not however consider the community impact of demonstrations. Since the Convoy, OPS not only considers public safety and *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* considerations, but also the impact on the community. Interim Chief Bell stated that the intelligence he was aware of did not indicate that the Freedom Convoy's impact on Ottawa communities would be severe, or that the convoy participants would use Ottawa communities as a leverage point to achieve their objectives. Additionally, the experience that occurred of horns blaring, trucks idling, criminal activity and hate-based incidents that occurred was not something captured in the intelligence.

Role of Hendon Reports in Intelligence

Project Hendon, an intelligence sharing network led by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), prepared intelligence reports on the Freedom Convoy and shared them with OPS starting in January 2022. Interim Chief Bell characterized Project Hendon as OPS's most important source of intelligence on the Freedom Convoy before it arrived in Ottawa. He characterized Project Hendon as a collaborative effort between intelligence partners and noted that OPS participated in intelligence sharing calls that fed information into the Project Hendon reports.

Interim Chief Bell learned that Project Hendon was reporting on the Freedom Convoy early in the week of January 24. He learned of Project Hendon reports through discussions with Superintendent Patterson, and began to receive those reports on January 27. He is not aware of how many Project Hendon reports OPS received before that date or the totality of information they contained. He stated that Chief Sloly was receiving Project Hendon reports from January 13, 2022, but neither informed him of the existence of Project Hendon nor forwarded him any Project Hendon reports before January 27.



Interim Chief Bell did not think that Superintendent Patterson and Inspector Bryden were on the Project Hendon distribution list in early January 2022. Superintendent Patterson however began receiving Project Hendon reports as of January 13, 2022.

Interim Chief Bell was aware that Project Hendon held daily intelligence briefings in the week before the Freedom Convoy arrived in Ottawa. He did not attend these briefings, although others in the Intelligence Directorate did.

Interim Chief Bell stated that he broadly expanded access to Project Hendon reports within OPS once he learned of the reports' existence.

Other Sources of Information

Interim Chief Bell was aware that OPS was receiving information from many sources in addition to Project Hendon. On January 24 at 9:16 a.m., Chief Sloly copied Interim Chief Bell on a reply to an email from a Toronto Police Service officer who sent Chief Sloly a video showing convoy vehicles and participants in Toronto and told Chief Sloly that they would be heading to Ottawa.³ Interim Chief Bell did not specifically recall receiving this email. He observed that Superintendent Patterson and the planners were copied, so the information would have gone to the right places, and likely would have been shared with the JIG for assessment.

On January 26 at 6:40 a.m., Chief Sloly forwarded to Interim Chief Bell and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson an email from an Ottawa resident to Chief Sloly with the subject line "Safety of residents surrounding Rideau Hall this weekend – extreme right pledging violence."⁴ Chief Sloly's email stated that the resident "is seeing online postings from what he calls extreme right wing elements calling for violence" at the Freedom Convoy.⁵ Chief Sloly's email also stated: "Please review all available info/intel/incidents and ensure we have the most accurate threat assessment and the most appropriate operations plan for the event."⁶ Interim Chief Bell stated that he was always concerned about public safety and acts of violence, and that the threat assessment evolved as the Freedom Convoy drew closer to Ottawa.

OPS's Assessment of the Intelligence

Interim Chief Bell noted that before January 27, the intelligence concerning the numbers of protestors and vehicles expected to arrive in Ottawa was very fluid, that expected

³ OPS00002900.

⁴ OPS00003073.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*



numbers fluctuated, and that he did not recall receiving a full or accurate intelligence picture of the number of vehicles that would attend before January 27. As an example, PLT reported that the western Freedom Convoy lost many vehicles once it crossed the Manitoba-Ontario border.

Interim Chief Bell stated that, as the Freedom Convoy drew closer, OPS knew that it was projected to be large. He noted that by January 29, OPS was expecting 3000-4000 vehicles to arrive in Ottawa.

Interim Chief Bell characterized understanding the level of organization of the Freedom Convoy as one of OPS's biggest challenges. His perception was that the group of convoy participants from western Canada was well-organized, but that there was limited organization within the Freedom Convoy overall. He noted that the Freedom Convoy included 8-10 different groups representing 50-100 different political agendas, and that OPS struggled to identify an organizing group. He did become aware on or around January 22 that the Freedom Convoy was planning to establish a "war room" upon arrival in Ottawa. He stated that OPS continued to monitor the "war room" plans as the convoy approached Ottawa.

Interim Chief Bell stated that OPS was aware that former police and military members were convoy participants, that convoy participants were bringing heavy equipment with them, and that the Freedom Convoy had raised significant sums of money on GoFundMe. He stated that OPS was continually maintaining intelligence on the heavy equipment being transported, although there were not extensive amounts of heavy equipment. He also noted that he was actively involved in requesting GoFundMe to stop the fundraising campaign.

Interim Chief Bell was aware of intelligence reporting that a smaller group of convoy participants of undetermined size, predominantly made up of participants in the western Freedom Convoy, would stay for a long period of time. He stated that OPS did not receive indications that other convoy participants who did not participate in the western Freedom Convoy would stay for a long period of time. Instead, it was OPS's belief that convoy participants that did not participate in the western Freedom Convoy would attend Ottawa for the January 29-30 weekend and then depart at the end of the weekend.

Pre-Arrival Planning

Initial Incident Commander & Event Commander

Interim Chief Bell stated that Inspector Russell Lucas was OPS's original Incident Commander, and that Inspector Lucas served as Incident Commander throughout the Freedom Convoy. Superintendent Chris Rheame was the superintendent in charge of Inspector Lucas and would have overseen Inspector Lucas's work and provided direct input on planning and preparing for the Freedom Convoy. Interim Chief Bell stated that Superintendent Rheame began to serve as OPS's first Event Commander later in the week of January 24 after OPS identified the importance of the Event Commander role.



Interim Chief Bell commented during the interview that the Event Commander role was not clearly documented.

Sharing Intelligence with Planning Team

Interim Chief Bell stated that he directed Superintendent Patterson to ensure that the intelligence being gathered was shared with the planning team. He emphasized that the planning team needed to receive the most fulsome intelligence possible.

Interim Chief Bell understood that it was the Intelligence Directorate's responsibility to analyze and assess information before information was provided to the planning team. He noted that the planning team should be able to rely on the Intelligence Directorate to assess intelligence, and that planners should not need to read Project Hendon reports or review open-source information. He was not aware if the planning team received Project Hendon reports. However, he continued to direct Superintendent Patterson to share the intelligence in a timely manner with the planning team.

Pre-Arrival Operational Plan and Threat/Risk Assessment

Interim Chief Bell believed that he would have read the operational plan titled "Freedom Convoy – Canada Unity," dated January 28, 2022 (**Pre-Arrival Operational Plan**). He noted that he was not involved in the development of the plan.

The Pre-Arrival Operational Plan contains a "Threat Assessment" section. Interim Chief Bell stated that the Intelligence Directorate was responsible for providing information to the plan writers to include in this section. He stated that this section was intended to amalgamate and provide an overall picture and assessment of the intelligence that OPS had received. He stated that he did not prepare the "Threat Assessment" section and would not have edited it.

The "Threat Assessment" section states that "[t]he Canadian Integrated Terror Assessment Centre (ITAC) indicates that the current threat level for Canada is medium." Interim Chief Bell indicated that this passage refers to the threat level for a terrorist attack and that the ITAC threat level has been medium for the past 10 years.

Interim Chief Bell acknowledged that the "Threat Assessment" section of the Pre-Arrival Operational Plan did not discuss the risk that some convoy participants might stay beyond the January 29-30 weekend.

Interim Chief Bell was not aware if OPS had contingency plans if convoy participants stayed beyond the January 29-30 weekend.

Authority to and Planning for Road Closures

At the time of the Freedom Convoy's arrival, the OPS executive's understanding was that OPS lacked the unilateral authority to close roads, except in limited situations. Interim Chief Bell noted that OPS could limit vehicular traffic, but that its ability to limit pedestrian



traffic was much more limited. He commented that the City of Ottawa (**City**) did have the ability to close the roads and the OPS would work collaboratively with the City to do so.

Interim Chief Bell did not recall any discussions in which OPS considered preventing vehicular access to downtown Ottawa and permitting protestors to attend downtown Ottawa only on foot. He noted that OPS had regularly policed protests by 5,000 pedestrians without shutting down Wellington St. or closing large tracts of roads for long periods of time.

Pre-Arrival Discussions with Partners

Arrangement with Superintendent Abrams

Craig Abrams is OPP's Superintendent of Operations for the East Region and served as OPP's strategic superintendent in charge of the Freedom Convoy as it travelled to Ottawa and after its arrival. Before the Freedom Convoy arrived, Interim Chief Bell agreed to be Superintendent Abrams' contact person at OPS to lessen the burden on Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson, who was overseeing planning and operations. He stated that Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson would relay requests for OPP assistance to him, that he would check with Superintendent Abrams what support OPP could provide, and that he would then relay OPP's response back to Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson. Interim Chief Bell stated that he and Superintendent Abrams discussed obtaining OPP support on January 26, and that he reported Superintendent Abrams' response back to Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson.

Briefing of Ottawa Police Services Board

On January 26, Interim Chief Bell attended an Ottawa Police Services Board (**OPSB**) meeting. Before the meeting, at 7:50 a.m. on January 26, OPS Executive Director of Strategy & Communications John Steinbachs sent Chief Sloly, Interim Chief Bell, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson and other OPS officers a draft update to the OPSB that stated that "all open source information and our interactions with organizers indicate that this will be a significant and extremely fluid event that could go on for a prolonged period (January 28 to 30)."⁷ Interim Chief Bell stated that, at the time, this statement accurately reflected OPS's belief that protestors would stay through the weekend and then most of them would leave. He stated that this belief was based on the totality of information received and OPS's experience with protests.

Ministerial and Parliamentary Protection Meeting

On January 28 at 4:30 p.m., Interim Chief Bell participated in a meeting with Royal Canadian Mounted Police (**RCMP**) and Parliamentary Protective Service (**PPS**)

⁷ OPS00003051.



representatives.⁸ RCMP and PPS had requested information from OPS about what would occur during the Freedom Convoy, what they should expect, and how OPS would respond. Chief Sloly and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson were aware of RCMP and PPS's request, and Chief Sloly asked Interim Chief Bell to brief RCMP and PPS.

During the meeting, Interim Chief Bell informed RCMP and PPS that OPS was planning to permit trucks and vehicles to enter downtown Ottawa and park there, including on Wellington St., and that OPS would be coordinating the departure of convoy participants on Sunday, January 30. He told RCMP and PPS that OPS was hoping that the situation in downtown Ottawa would return to normal by the end of the January 29-30 weekend. He stated that RCMP and PPS representatives at the meeting appeared confident in the plan that OPS presented and he did not recall them reacting negatively to OPS's plan to allow convoy trucks and vehicles onto Wellington.

Three Phases of the OPS Response to the Freedom Convoy

Interim Chief Bell stated that OPS's response to the Freedom Convoy progressed through three phases (although the weekends would not be included as they were completely different): (1) orientation and adaptation (January 28-February 4), (2) ad hoc responses and orientation towards a long-term plan (February 7-11), (3) development of a longer-term plan (February 14-18). Phases one and two were punctuated by the February 5-6 weekend, and phases two and three were punctuated by the February 12-13 weekend. Interim Chief Bell characterized these weekends as distinct periods from the three phases where the numbers of protestors and the party atmosphere increased, interference with the community and community complaints rose, and police operations focused on maintaining a presence and responding to incidents.

During phase one, OPS attempted to orient itself and adapt to the protestors' continued presence in Ottawa. During this period, OPS gathered intelligence and information, reactively started investigations, and attempted to identify options to end the occupation of Ottawa.

During phase two, OPS was involved in ad hoc enforcement and orienting to long term planning to resolve the occupation.

Phase three was characterized by intensive planning by Superintendent Bernier with the assistance of the OPP and RCMP to develop a clear, detailed, and achievable plan to end the occupation. Interim Chief Bell noted this period was also a distracted one for OPS due to Chief Sloly's resignation, and the drama at Ottawa City Council.

⁸ Interim Chief Bell Notes (OPS00014525) at PDF p. 2.



January 29-30 Weekend, Phase One & February 5-6 Weekend

January 29-30 Weekend

Interim Chief Bell recalled acting as a conduit between the OPS planning and operations teams and Superintendent Abrams during the January 29-30 weekend. Interim Chief Bell was shown email notes from a 5:30 p.m. OPS call that he received at 6:31 p.m. on January 29 that stated “offer from OPP to help but not needed.”⁹ He stated that it would not have been his decision to determine if OPP’s assistance was not needed, and that it would have been determined by the planning team.

Interim Chief Bell acted as a conduit for receiving information from Superintendent Andrews and the planning team. Interim Chief Bell does recall that on January 30, Superintendent Abrams informed him that OPS had failed to provide deployment instructions to 8 of the 10 officers OPP provided to OPS that day. He discussed the matter with DC Ferguson and relayed information back from her to Superintendent Abrams.

Beginning of Phase 1 & Intensification of Protestor Behaviour

Interim Chief Bell stated that as Sunday, January 30 progressed into Monday, OPS was not prepared for what developed into an occupation. In retrospect, Interim Chief Bell states that OPS was exceptionally unprepared but has now made significant changes to how it responds and supports these types of operations.

Throughout the week of January 31, anti-social behaviour intensified and community support for protestors decreased. Interim Chief Bell observed that, while protestors may have initially intended to be a peaceful, lawful group protesting federal government policies, the actions of those that remained the following week showed that this was not the case.

Interim Chief Bell recalled a discussion in later January/early February in which Superintendent Abrams informed him that it appeared that OPP members were policing downtown Ottawa (especially for overnight shifts) but that very few OPS members were present in downtown Ottawa. The OPP had thought that they were given the bad shifts, but this was not correct. OPS officers had actually worked 4 days straight. Although OPS was having staffing issues, some members worked extraordinary amounts of overtime to make sure the Convoy was peacefully resolved.

Communications Challenges

During the Freedom Convoy, Interim Chief Bell provided examples of announcements made by Chief Sloly that caused trust problems: (1) OPS messaging during the January

⁹ OPS00004438.



29-30 weekend, (2) OPS's "surge and contain" messaging, and (3) OPS messaging about the seizure of gas cans.

First, OPS's messaging during the January 29-30 weekend was that the Freedom Convoy was a lawful, peaceful demonstration. The community was however starting to feel mounting pressure from the horns and intimidation.

Second, Chief Sloly announced a "surge and contain" strategy to flood the neighbourhoods with officers to respond to events. While this was a great premise, there was no confirmation that it was attainable. Interim Chief Bell commented that the flood of officers into areas affected by convoy participants that Chief Sloly announced never materialized.

Third, Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly's messaging and announcements that OPS would seize fuel canisters from protestors was something that OPS could not deliver. This should not have been announced. This was very damaging.

On February 2, Chief Sloly stated publicly that "[t]here may not be a police solution to this demonstration." Interim Chief Bell noted that Chief Sloly did not inform him that he intended to make that statement, and that Chief Sloly never informed Interim Chief Bell what he meant. Interim Chief Bell's view was that there was a policing solution that resolved the occupation.

Roles of Advanced Symbolics Inc. and Navigator Ltd.

Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly engaged Navigator Ltd. (**Navigator**) to provide strategic communications advice to OPS. He attended some meetings where Navigator was present. However, Chief Sloly participated in regular, ongoing meetings with Navigator that Interim Chief Bell was not privy to, including more than one meeting on certain days. As the Freedom Convoy event continued, Navigator's role expanded and Chief Sloly used Navigator as a conduit to engage with City of Ottawa, provincial, and federal politicians, to develop communications information, and to participate in discussions about operational matters.

Interim Chief Bell recalled a February 11 12:10 p.m. meeting that he, Chief Sloly, and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson participated in with Navigator.¹⁰ During the meeting, Chief Sloly engaged with Navigator in open discussions that generated ideas about how to pursue police operations, including how police were managing the operation and how to communicate police operations to the public. Interim Chief Bell understood that Chief Sloly found it to be appropriate to involve Navigator in these discussions.

Interim Chief Bell also recalled that on February 12, Navigator principal Jamie Watt entered his office and began discussing police operations with him. He noted that Mr.

¹⁰ Interim Chief Bell Notes (OPS00014525) at PDF p. 44.



Watt was working out of the OPS building at 474 Elgin St. that day. Mr. Watt told Interim Chief Bell that it was a problem that OPS had not actively responded to a group of people who removed fencing surrounding the National War Memorial on the afternoon of February 12, and that OPS should take a more active approach. Interim Chief Bell did not receive Mr. Watt's request well because he viewed Mr. Watt's involvement in operational discussions as inappropriate. On February 13 at 4:01 p.m., Interim Chief Bell thanked Mr. Watt for his advice by email.¹¹ He stated that he did so because Chief Sloly had chosen to involve Navigator in OPS's response to the Freedom Convoy and he did not want to burn bridges with Navigator as a result.

During the interview, Interim Chief Bell expressed concerns about the involvement of Navigator in operational discussions. First, he expressed privacy concerns about sharing information with Navigator. Second, he stated that it was inappropriate for Navigator's communication strategy to drive police operations. Rather, he stated that OPS should determine a sound course of operations and then develop a communication strategy to support that course of operations.

Interim Chief Bell understood that Chief Sloly had a long-term relationship with Advanced Symbolics Inc. (ASI). He stated that Chief Sloly asked ASI to use open-source information to determine the impact of OPS messaging and how the public was perceiving key policing-related issues. Interim Chief Bell did not attend any meetings with ASI and did not know the specifics of how Chief Sloly was using ASI, including whether Chief Sloly was using ASI to prepare or provide input into media announcements.

Interim Chief Bell terminated OPS's contract with ASI and Navigator after he became Interim Chief. He explained that he did not believe that their assistance was effective to help resolve the occupation of Ottawa. He also mentioned that OPS had in-house communications staff and that he was confident in their ability to manage communications without outside assistance.

Challenges with the Incident Command System Model

OPS struggled to follow the ICS model during the Freedom Convoy. Under the ICS model, the Chief is to operate at the strategic level, but is not supposed to make operational or tactical decisions. Instead, operational decisions are the purview of the Incident Commander or, for a more complex event, the Event Commander. Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly acted contrary to the ICS model by frequently involving himself in operational and tactical matters and providing operational and tactical directions. Interim Chief noted that Chief Sloly's understanding of his role and involvement at the operational and tactical levels led to a lack of clarity and fostered confusion that negatively impacted OPS operations.

¹¹ OPS00010877.



Interim Chief Bell provided examples of Chief Sloly's involvement at the operational and tactical levels. First, Interim Chief Bell mentioned an occasion in which Chief Sloly attended the OPS parade room where members attend before deployments and directed members to go out onto the streets and conduct enforcement activities. Second, Interim Chief Bell mentioned that on Saturday, February 5 and Saturday, February 12, Chief Sloly directed the closure of highway off-ramps and interprovincial bridges (as described in greater detail below). Third, Interim Chief Bell mentioned that on the morning of Saturday, February 5, Chief Sloly provided tactical and potentially operational direction on specific protest sites to clear and that he prioritized clearing Confederation Park (as described in greater detail below).

Changes to the Event Commander Role

OPS shifted Event Commanders twice between February 3-6. Around February 3, the initial Event Commander, Superintendent Rheume, agreed with Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson that he needed to take time off. Interim Chief Bell did not learn why Superintendent Rheume needed to take time off. Interim Chief Bell stated that Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson consulted with him, that he recommended Superintendent Dunlop because he was experienced in planning and delivering police responses to protests. Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson subsequently appointed Superintendent Dunlop to the Event Commander role. Interim Chief Bell did not direct Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson to appoint Superintendent Dunlop or otherwise force Superintendent Dunlop's appointment.

On February 5 at 9:00 a.m., Chief Sloly met with Interim Chief Bell and Acting Interim Chief Bell and informed them that he did not want Superintendent Dunlop to continue as Event Commander. During the meeting, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson and Interim Chief Bell highlighted the benefits of keeping Superintendent Dunlop. Chief Sloly responded that it was their decision as to whether to keep or replace Superintendent Dunlop and that he would hold them accountable for it. Following the meeting, Interim Chief Bell and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson had discussions and decided that Superintendent Dunlop could not continue as Event Commander because Chief Sloly did not trust him. Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson accordingly replaced Superintendent Dunlop with Superintendent Marc Patterson, who assumed the Event Commander role on February 6.

Restrictions on & Different Perspectives concerning PLT Role

During the interview, Interim Chief Bell stated that there were different perspectives within OPS on the role of PLT during the Freedom Convoy. Interim Chief Bell and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson were major supporters of PLT and advocated for providing PLT latitude to adequately negotiate with protestors. They believed that PLT could generate small wins that could create dialogue and lead to bigger wins and ultimately a negotiated settlement that allowed everyone to save face. In contrast, Chief Sloly and Superintendent Patterson wanted to obtain quick wins. Unless PLT could convince protestors to leave, they saw no room to negotiate and preferred utilizing enforcement. Interim Chief Bell explained that, because of these different perspectives, there was often no agreement on how much negotiation should occur before OPS launched an enforcement operation.



PLT faced constraints in negotiating with protestors during the week of January 31. Interim Chief Bell recalled that, at one point, PLT wanted to bring port-a-potties to the protest site on Wellington St. as a negotiation tactic. He stated that Chief Sloly did not receive this proposal well because he was concerned about the appearance of OPS giving into and supporting protestors. Interim Chief Bell characterized Chief Sloly's rejection of this proposal as an example of his view that negotiations needed to result in a big win, instead of iterative negotiations that would ultimately lead to a larger win.

Interim Chief Bell noted that Dr. Peter Collins came to Ottawa to assist PLT in negotiating with protestors during the week of January 31. He worked with Staff Sergeant John Ferguson, the head of the OPS PLT team, to support PLT's negotiation efforts. Interim Chief Bell noted that Dr. Collins was employed or contracted by OPP and that he expected that OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique assigned him to Ottawa to support OPS. Interim Chief Bell did not know the specifics of how Dr. Collins came to be in Ottawa.

February 4-6: Highway Off-Ramp and Bridge Closures, Clearing of Confederation Park, and Coventry Road Operation

On February 4 during an 11:40 a.m. press conference, Chief Sloly announced that police would close highway off-ramps and interprovincial bridges to prevent convoy participants from entering Ottawa. Superintendent Abrams called Interim Chief Bell and informed him that OPS had not consulted OPP. On February 5 during a 10:00 a.m. briefing meeting that Interim Chief Bell attended, Chief Sloly directed OPS officers attending the meeting to close off-ramps and bridges.¹² Interim Chief Bell stated that his understanding was that OPP, not OPS was responsible for closing off-ramps, and that OPS lacked authority to close interprovincial bridges. He stated that he discussed the limits on OPS's authority to close interprovincial bridges and highway off-ramps with Chief Sloly. He also recalled hearing in briefings that OPP declined to close highway off-ramps, though he did not know the reasons why. Interim Chief Bell characterized the contemplated closure of off-ramps and bridges as an example of OPS making announcements that it could not deliver on.

On February 5 at 8:00 a.m., Interim Chief Bell attended a briefing in Chief Sloly's executive board room.¹³ He stated that Chief Sloly stepped outside of the strategic level of the ICS model and provided tactical and potentially operational direction during this meeting. Specifically, Chief Sloly prioritized clearing protestors from Confederation Park. OPS was facing considerable public pressure to clear Confederation Park because protestors were building a non-temporary soup kitchen structure there, which became a focus of social media and media attention. At the meeting, this direction was contentious. PLT wanted to attempt through negotiation to convince protestors to leave the park, whereas other OPS officers wanted to launch an enforcement operation to clear the park.

¹² Interim Chief Bell Notes (OPS00014525) at PDF p. 17.

¹³ *Id.* at PDF p. 13.



He noted that there was no agreement at the time about how much negotiation should occur before enforcement activities began. Interim Chief Bell also recalled discussion at the meeting about bringing in an outside negotiator to engage with higher-level Freedom Convoy leaders and serve as a conduit to politicians.

PLT convinced protestors to leave Confederation Park on February 6. Interim Chief Bell was not sure who authorized PLT to engage with protestors, but he understood that PLT operations were the responsibility of the Event Commander and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson.

Interim Chief Bell also discussed the Coventry Road operation. He understood from briefings that on February 6, PLT negotiated with protestors to remove fuel from the site, but that POU arrested the protestors as they were removing fuel pursuant to the negotiation with PLT. That evening, at 7:45 p.m., Interim Chief Bell participated in an OPS command call.¹⁴ He recalled that concerns about the Coventry Road operation damaging the role of PLT were voiced on this call. Interim Chief Bell also recalls that Superintendent Abrams called him and expressed concern that enforcement actions were compromising the efforts of the OPS and OPP PLT teams. Interim Chief Bell had various conversations after the Coventry Road operation to discuss concerns about protestor loss of trust in PLT, that OPS lacked a genuine commitment to negotiation, and that PLT lacked the latitude to carry out its mandate.

Requests for Additional Resources

Interim Chief Bell recalled that during the February 6, 7:45 p.m. command call, Chief Sloly instructed his staff to submit resource requests required to end the occupation. On February 7, Chief Sloly publicly announced that OPS needed 1800 officers from other police forces. Interim Chief Bell stated that this was not within his area of responsibility.

Interim Chief Bell agreed that it was a good strategy to indicate to partner agencies what resources OPS might need in advance of developing a plan because it would take considerable time to deploy those resources to Ottawa. However, he stated that it would have been preferable to do so by discussing the resource requests with partner agencies in a forum such as an all-chiefs call instead of making a public announcement. He also stated that once an operational plan was developed, it would provide greater specifics on how many and what types of officers were needed, their tasks upon deployment, and how long they were needed for.

¹⁴ *Id.* at PDF p. 24.



Phase 2 & February 12-13 Weekend¹⁵

Arrival of Integrated Planning Team & Initial Meeting with OPS

On February 8, Interim Chief Bell learned that an Integrated Planning Team (**Team**) of OPP and RCMP planners, including OPP Chief Superintendent Carson Pardy, would be arriving in Ottawa to help OPS. He did not know what resources the Team was bringing, but he was aware that Chief Sloly had spoken with Commissioner Carrique and RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki the day before the Team arrived.

On February 8 at 5:00 p.m., the Integrated Planning Team met with OPS officers, including Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson. Interim Chief Bell did not attend this meeting.

Development of February 9 Plan

On February 9 at 7:15 a.m., Interim Chief Bell and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson attended a briefing by Chief Sloly.¹⁶ During the briefing, Chief Sloly presented what he termed operational plan/TRA 3.0, mission “Hydra” (the **February 9 Plan**). Interim Chief Bell did not recall what 3.0 was in reference to. Interim Chief Bell understood that the objective of the February 9 Plan was to end the unlawful and unsafe aspects of the demonstration and occupation.

During the above meeting, Chief Sloly characterized the Freedom Convoy protestors as a multi-headed being—a hydra—and stated that he intended OPS to cut off one of the heads and cauterize what was cut off. Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly also wrote the Greek words “Hera” and “Iona” on the board as part of the briefing. Interim Chief Bell did not understand what these words meant. On February 10, Interim Chief Bell informed Inspector Kevin Maloney that OPS should cease referring to the February 9 Plan as mission “Hydra” because in the Marvel Comics universe Hydra is a Nazi-affiliated organization. Interim Chief Bell explained that OPS subsequently dropped the “Hydra” name for this reason.

During the interview, Interim Chief Bell characterized that the February 9 Plan as an overall framework that had not yet been developed into a detailed set of plans supported by adequate resources, and that it was not near the level of detail needed for the plan that OPS ultimately developed.

¹⁵ Interim Chief Bell’s involvement in negotiations between Freedom Convoy leaders and the City between February 9-14 is addressed further below in the sub-section titled “Negotiations between Freedom Convoy Leaders and the City between February 9-14.”

¹⁶ OPS00014525 at PDF p. 30.



February 9 9:15 a.m. Meeting on Integrated Planning and Executive Roles

After the briefing ended, Chief Sloly met with Interim Chief Bell, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson, and OPS Chief Administrative Officer Blair Dunker at 9:15 a.m.¹⁷ During this meeting, Chief Sloly told the attendees that the Integrated Planning Team had come to judge OPS, to take control or command of the situation, and that they would base decisions on whether to send RCMP and OPP resources on whether OPS had plans. Chief Sloly expressed the view that OPP and RCMP were not here to help and were taking directions from their political masters.

Interim Chief Bell and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson disagreed with Chief Sloly. They told Chief Sloly that RCMP and OPP were in Ottawa to assist OPS, that OPS should treat them as good partners and cooperate with them, and that a collective OPS-OPP-RCMP effort was required to end the occupation. Interim Chief Bell explained that he thought that OPP and RCMP wanted the occupation to end and that they did not want to keep the protestors contained in Ottawa. He never thought that OPP and RCMP placed Ottawa on the backburner relative to other locations of protests and blockades. Interim Chief Bell explained that his perspective on RCMP and OPP's role was influenced by the fact that he had worked with OPP before, and with Chief Superintendent Pardy on major events. He had also worked at RCMP for many years.

During the meeting, Chief Sloly also attempted to create clarity on his expectations and to define roles and responsibilities. He stated that only he could approve strategy and that Deputy Chief Ferguson was the executive-level lead below him responsible for planning and operations. He also told Interim Chief Bell that he should cease involvement in Freedom Convoy-related matters and focus on overseeing OPS's organizational change management activities. Interim Chief Bell understood Chief Sloly to be creating a linear command structure that placed command and control responsibilities with himself.

On three occasions during the call, Chief Sloly stated that those who supported his direction would be rewarded, but that he would crush anyone who got in the way of his direction. Interim Chief Bell perceived that Chief Sloly was attempting to call out actions that he thought were interfering with his direction. Interim Chief Bell was surprised by these comments. Chief Sloly was under significant pressure and stress at the time.

February 9 Meeting with Integrated Planning Team and Follow-Up

On February 9 at 12:10 p.m., Interim Chief Bell participated in a meeting between OPS and the Integrated Planning Team.¹⁸ Chief Sloly and Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson also attended. Interim Chief Bell characterized the meeting as contentious and heated. He

¹⁷ *Id.* at PDF p. 32.

¹⁸ *Id.* at PDF p. 34.



recalled that Superintendent Patterson presented information from a document titled “OPS Strategic Concept of Operations – Ottawa Truck Demonstration 2022.” Interim Chief Bell stated that Superintendent Patterson’s presentation corresponded to the February 9 Plan discussed at the 7:15 a.m. briefing that morning, which Interim Chief Bell characterized as a strategic concept of operations. Interim Chief Bell stated that OPP and RCMP made clear during the 12:10 p.m. meeting that they wanted a more developed and focused plan than the February 9 Plan.

On February 10 at 3:28 p.m., Interim Chief Bell received an email from Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson’s executive assistant that contained the notes from a 11:00 a.m. briefing that morning.¹⁹ A bullet in that email stated: “Outcome of RCMP and OPP meeting; ensure follow-up occurred for the specific request for the plan from them.” Interim Chief Bell stated that he understood that this bullet referenced RCMP and OPP’s request at the February 9 12:10 p.m. meeting for a more developed and focused plan.

Integrated Planning Team’s February 10 Assessment

During the interview, Interim Chief Bell was shown an excerpt from a February 10 draft demobilization plan prepared by the Integrated Planning Team.²⁰ Section 3.1 of that document described the police response to the Freedom Convoy to date as follows:

¹⁹ OPS00009675.

²⁰ OPP00004283.



3.1 Deployment Plan

Current

- Not Intelligence Led
- Participants have the initiative – Have retired police tactical leaders guiding (chief of security)
- Reactive, tactical, aggressive, risk
- Poor communications
 - No communication strategy (internal/external)
- Unclear and vague Command & control
- Unqualified trained leadership
- No or poor partner collaboration
 - Lack of collaboration
 - Strategy
 - Tactical
 - Focused on local issues only – no national perspective
- OPS focus is only maintenance and not resolution
- Boots on the ground
 - Low moral
 - Frustration
 - Lack of leadership/confidence of command- no clear direction
 - Physical & mental – exhausted
 - Poor decision making
 - Longer
 - Information sharing – incomplete and unknown command structure/OP not signed off
- Logistics
 - Hotel, staging, joining instructions/creature comforts Comms Tools/PPE
 - Network sharing
 - Info incomplete - unknown command structure
 - Org Chart not developed
 - Police resources - Not integrated
- Police Vulnerability – Business Continuity

Interim Chief Bell stated that he viewed Section 3.1 as a fair and accurate third-party assessment of the situation OPS was in as of February 10 with one exception. He did question the statement that the current situation was “Not Intelligence Led,” and noted that OPS had continued to gather and funnel intelligence throughout the Freedom Convoy. He also noted that the bullet points in Section 3.1 varied in their importance.



Appointment of Superintendent Bernier as Event Commander

Superintendent Bernier replaced Superintendent Patterson as Event Commander on February 10. Interim Chief Bell was aware that, upon Superintendent Bernier's appointment, he insisted on his autonomy and requested that Superintendent Drummond be assigned to act as Executive Liaison between Superintendent Bernier and the OPS executive. Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly was looking to be actively involved in and updated on planning and operations, that he had many requests and questions, and that it would be overly taxing on Superintendent Bernier to engage directly with Chief Sloly while simultaneously trying to resolve the occupation. As Executive Liaison, Superintendent Drummond's role was to respond to Chief Sloly's questions and engage with Chief Sloly and the OPS executive while Superintendent Bernier developed the plan.

On February 11 at 10:16 p.m., Superintendent Bernier copied Interim Chief Bell on an email that included his "New Mission Statement" and "Main Action Plan."²¹ Interim Chief Bell was aware that the Pre-Arrival Operational Plan and the February 9 Plan also contained mission statements and main action plans.

Highway and Bridge Closures on February 12

On February 12, Interim Chief Bell learned at a morning briefing that intelligence was indicating that convoys would be arriving in Ottawa from Quebec over the February 12-13 weekend. During the briefing, Chief Sloly directed that OPS close interprovincial bridges and highway off-ramps into Ottawa until Monday, February 14. Chief Sloly indicated that OPS needed to act because of the municipal and provincial states of emergency.

Interim Chief Bell engaged in back-and-forth discussions with Chief Sloly about whether OPS had authority to close interprovincial bridges and highway off-ramps, including at a 12:17 p.m. meeting that OPS general counsel Christiane Huneault attended.²² Interim Chief Bell explained that while planning and operations would ordinarily have been Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson's responsibility, he was relieving Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson that day so that she could rest. Ultimately, Chief Sloly agreed that OPS lacked authority to close the bridges and off-ramps and rescinded his direction.

During these discussions, Interim Chief Bell informed Chief Sloly that Superintendent Bernier had developed a traffic mitigation plan to divert arriving convoys away from the downtown core instead of closing off-ramps and bridges. Chief Sloly told Interim Chief Bell that he needed more details on Superintendent Bernier's plan so he could decide whether to approve it. After some back and forth, OPS implemented the traffic mitigation

²¹ OPP00002162.

²² Interim Chief Bell Notes (OPS00014525) at PDF p. 50.



plan, which kept convoys from entering the downtown core. Interim Chief Bell's notes record that, during the 12:17 p.m. meeting, Chief Sloly told him that Chief Sloly "would assess the plan & if not satisfied would take appropriate action."²³ Interim Chief Bell explained that Chief Sloly was asserting his authority to approve or reject the traffic mitigation plan that Superintendent Bernier was developing, as well as to hold Interim Chief Bell accountable if that plan did not meet the thresholds that Chief Sloly believed it needed to meet.

February 12 Call with Commissioners Carrique and Lucki & Briefing with Integrated Planning Team

On February 12 at 2:00 p.m., Interim Chief Bell and Chief Sloly met with Commissioners Carrique and Lucki. Interim Chief Bell's notes record that Commissioner Lucki stated that she "felt that messaging about not enough resources created officer safety issue."²⁴ Interim Chief Bell recalled that Chief Sloly advised that he was good with the integration plan. He also recalled that Chief Sloly stated that he wanted to be briefed on integration, changes to the operational plan, and PLT strategy. Interim Chief Bell did not understand what changes to the operational plan Chief Sloly was referencing. He explained that he was unfamiliar with the details of integration planning, what requests Chief Sloly had made, or what Chief Sloly had been promised because he was not responsible for planning and operations at the time.

Interim Chief Bell's notes of the meeting record that "chief adv not familiar w PLT, not there when he was in Toronto."²⁵ Interim Chief Bell was surprised by Chief Sloly's comment because he had participated in many discussions with Chief Sloly about the role of PLT during which information about PLT's role in the operation was shared. Interim Chief Bell stated that it was possible that Chief Sloly might have been referring to OPP's PLT team, rather than PLT teams generally.

Interim Chief Bell recalled that, after the 2:00 p.m. call ended, he joined a 3:10 p.m. briefing that Chief Sloly, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson, Superintendent Bernier, and members of the Integrated Planning Team also attended.²⁶

Development of February 13 Plan and Chief Sloly's Response to that Plan

On February 12-13, Superintendent Bernier began to work with the Integrated Planning Team to develop an operational plan. Interim Chief Bell understood that the Integrated

²³ *Id.* at PDF p. 51.

²⁴ *Id.* at PDF p. 54.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.* at PDF p. 51.



Planning Team brought a fresh perspective but also built on some elements of the February 9 Plan. By February 13, Superintendent Bernier and the Integrated Planning Team had prepared an initial plan to end the occupation (the **February 13 Plan**). OPS, OPP, and RCMP established an Integrated Command Centre (ICC) between February 12-13.

Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly made it very clear that it was his responsibility to approve the February 13 Plan. Chief Sloly's practice before the Freedom Convoy arrived was to approve operational plans. Interim Chief Bell did not observe any indications that Chief Sloly's perspective had changed and that Chief Sloly would be employing a different practice during the Freedom Convoy. Interim Chief Bell stated that when Chief Sloly asserted his authority to approve Superintendent Bernier's traffic mitigation plan on February 12, which Interim Chief Bell characterized as a minor traffic plan, Interim Chief Bell understood that Chief Sloly also wanted to approve the overall operational plan. Interim Chief Bell stated that Chief Sloly's role in approving the plan was inconsistent with the IMS model. Interim Chief Bell acknowledged that there was no line for Chief Sloly's signature in the February 13 Plan.

On February 14 at 9:30 a.m., Interim Chief Bell participated in a briefing that Chief Sloly, Superintendent Bernier, and Superintendent Drummond also attended. Interim Chief Bell recalled that Superintendent Bernier briefed them on egress planning. His notes for that meeting record "Chief: ensure we remain police of jurisdiction thru building of ICC."²⁷ Interim Chief Bell stated that this notation described a statement that Chief Sloly made during the meeting. The statement reflected Chief Sloly's concern that integrating command and creating an ICC would cause OPS to lose control of the police response to the Freedom Convoy to RCMP and OPP. Chief Sloly wanted OPS to remain the police of jurisdiction, and to remain in control. Interim Chief Bell perceived that Chief Sloly also preferred to have overall command and control of the response to the Freedom Convoy. Interim Chief Bell's view was that it was necessary to have a more joint and partner-oriented command and that it was inherent in integrated command that OPS would lose some control.

Between February 14 and his appointment as Interim Chief on February 15, Interim Chief Bell was not aware of any concerns that Chief Sloly was delaying the implementation of the February 13 Plan by seeking to review or approve it. Interim Chief Bell explained that he was not involved in planning and operational discussions between Chief Sloly, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson, and Superintendent Bernier because Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson resumed her role as executive sponsor of the plan on February 14. Interim Chief Bell continued to participate in briefings but otherwise returned to his responsibilities to oversee organizational change management projects and manage intelligence and investigations.

²⁷ *Id.* at PDF p. 69.



Negotiations between Freedom Convoy Leaders and the City between February 9-14

On February 9, Superintendent Patterson contacted Interim Chief Bell and requested the name of a contact person at the City for PLT to speak to. At the time, Interim Chief Bell was serving as OPS's principal negotiator at Chief Sloly's request. Interim Chief Bell subsequently provided Superintendent Patterson with City Manager Steve Kanellakos's contact information. He informed Chief Sloly that he had done so.

During the February 9 9:15 a.m. meeting described earlier, Chief Sloly told Interim Chief Bell that he had interfered in matters outside his purview by providing Mr. Kanellakos's contact information to Superintendent Patterson.

On February 10, Interim Chief Bell called Mr. Kanellakos and informed him that PLT was on its way to City Hall and wanted to meet with him to discuss a potential meeting with protestors. Interim Chief Bell stated that this was a brief call and that he did not perceive himself to have interfered in negotiations because he was merely notifying Mr. Kanellakos that PLT was en route to City Hall.

On February 12, Chief Sloly told Interim Chief Bell that the City was involved in discussions with the Convoy leaders to have movement with the current situation and that the information was highly confidential.

On February 13, Superintendent Drummond attended a meeting with Mr. Kanellakos and protest leaders. Interim Chief Bell stated that Superintendent Drummond's role was to serve as a conduit between the City and OPS so that OPS could provide logistical support. Interim Chief Bell did not attend this meeting. Mr. Kanellakos provided him with an update after the meeting, and he received further briefing on it within OPS. He learned that the City had agreed with certain protest leaders that protestors would move their vehicles from residential neighbourhoods, Coventry Road and the Market to Wellington St., and that OPS was to provide logistical support to the move. There was to be no back filling of the spots and there would be a departure at noon on Monday, February 14.

Interim Chief Bell informed Superintendent Bernier of the negotiations with the City on February 13. He did not inform Superintendent Bernier sooner because Chief Sloly directed him to keep the negotiations highly confidential on February 12. Interim Chief Bell stated that it would have been preferable to inform Superintendent Bernier sooner.

Interim Chief Bell recalled that, on February 14 during a 9:30 a.m. briefing, Superintendent Drummond provided an update on the negotiations with the City.²⁸ Interim Chief Bell learned that convoy vehicles began to move from neighbourhoods to Wellington that day. He stated that less than 40 trucks moved, that only some of the spots on Wellington St. that OPS identified were filled, that the agreement did not have the

²⁸ *Id.* at PDF p. 69.



impact on reducing the protestor footprint that it was intended to, and that the move had very little impact on operational planning. He noted that protestor leaders never met with Mayor Jim Watson because not enough protestor vehicles moved.

Interim Chief Bell characterized the agreement as successful insofar as it defused tensions between OPS, protestors, and Ottawa community members. At the time, there was increased hostility between protestors and OPS officers. Interim Chief Bell was concerned about a flashpoint developing that OPS would not be equipped to manage and that would interfere with moving forward with the plan then being developed to end the occupation.

Phase 3: Appointment as Interim Chief & Development of February 17 Plan

Appointment as Interim Chief

On February 15 at 11:40 a.m., Diane Deans, the Chair of OPSB, called Interim Chief Bell and asked him if he would be willing to serve as Interim Chief. Interim Chief Bell advised her that he would be willing, but he cautioned her about making dramatic leadership changes. Ms. Deans told him that discussions with Chief Sloly were ongoing and that she would update Interim Chief Bell. At the time of Ms. Deans' call, Chief Sloly had not informed Interim Chief Bell that he intended to resign. However, around the time of the call, Interim Chief Bell became aware of Twitter posts indicating that Chief Sloly had resigned.

On February 15 at 2:25 p.m., Interim Chief Bell spoke with Ms. Deans again. Interim Chief Bell asked Ms. Deans what was happening, as a previously scheduled 10:30 a.m. in camera briefing for OPSB had been delayed until 2:00 p.m. and was then delayed again. Ms. Deans informed him that, while discussions with Chief Sloly were still ongoing, Chief Sloly would be resigning. Ms. Deans and Interim Chief Bell agreed that Interim Chief Bell would serve as Interim Chief. At 3:20 p.m., OPSB met and appointed Interim Chief Bell as OPS Interim Chief.

Meeting with Commissioners Carrique and Lucki

At 5:00 p.m., Interim Chief Bell met with Commissioners Carrique and Lucki. He stated that they discussed establishing a unified and integrated command, and that they looked at adopting the RCMP's GSB model. Interim Chief Bell expressed support for employing the GSB model and establishing a unified command centre during the call.

During the call, Interim Chief Bell told Commissioners Carrique and Lucki that OPS knew that they were here to support OPS, that he appreciated their support, and that he wanted to put past challenges behind them. Interim Chief Bell wanted to reiterate that he understood that RCMP and OPP were great partners to OPS, and that any past challenges were behind them. He perceived that there was tension during Chief Sloly's meetings with RCMP and OPP, and he wanted to put those tensions behind them, as well as Chief Sloly's perception that RCMP and OPP's political masters were sending RCMP



and OPP to watch over OPS. Interim Chief Bell did not perceive a change in the level of RCMP and OPP engagement after Chief Sloly's resignation. OPS's staffing requests to RCMP and OPP were already in place at the time.

Discussions with Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson & Superintendent Bernier

Interim Chief Bell also recalled having a discussion with Superintendent Bernier on or after the evening of February 15. He knew that Superintendent Bernier had been struggling with an unclear command structure and interventions by the OPS executive, especially Chief Sloly. He told Superintendent Bernier that he had faith in his ability to deliver, that he believed in Superintendent Bernier's command structure and mission statement, and that he believed that Superintendent Bernier was on the right track and would support him. Interim Chief Bell also recalled that he spoke with Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson after he became Interim Chief and assured her that he supported and believed in her efforts to oversee planning and operations.

Discussions of ICS Model

Interim Chief Bell stated that he discussed the distinctions between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of command with Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson, Superintendent Bernier, and the Integrated Planning Team after he became Interim Chief. Specifically, Interim Chief Bell clarified that the building of plans was an operational matter within Superintendent Bernier's authority, and that the delivery of those plans was a tactical matter. Interim Chief Bell stated that these conversations were necessary because the distinctions between these levels had been unclear before he became Interim Chief. He stated that making these distinctions was necessary to the success of the operation.

Interim Chief Bell recalled that Superintendent Bernier, Chief Superintendent Parady, and RCMP Superintendent Phil Lue briefed him on the plans they were developing after he became Interim Chief. During the briefing, Superintendent Bernier asked Interim Chief Bell to approve planned levels of use of force. Interim Chief Bell was surprised because he considered appropriate levels of use of force to be an operational level decision based on tactical-level inputs. He told Superintendent Bernier that his approval was not required, and that Superintendent Bernier should make the call.

Development of February 17 Plan

After Chief Sloly's resignation, Superintendent Bernier and the Integrated Planning Team continued to work to develop the February 13 Plan into a more detailed operational plan and supporting sub-plans (collectively, the **February 17 Plan**). Interim Chief Bell characterized the February 17 Plan as the best, safest, and most deliberate and intentional plan to end the occupation that was developed during the Freedom Convoy. He stated that it was a detailed, sophisticated, and complex plan to end the occupation, and that it took considerable planning to develop.



Operational Response and Maintenance Phases: February 17 Onwards

Interim Chief Bell stated that by February 17, Superintendent Bernier, OPP, and RCMP had finalized the February 17 Plan. On that date, Interim Chief Bell approved the decision to launch the operation that the plan contemplated. The operation began on February 18. Interim Chief Bell stated that the operation was complete and had cleared downtown Ottawa by February 21. At that time, OPS began the maintenance phase.

Impact of Emergency Declarations

Impact of Municipal and Provincial Emergency Declarations

On February 6, Mayor Watson declared a state of emergency for Ottawa in response to the Freedom Convoy. Interim Chief Bell stated that this declaration signalled the extreme situation that the City was in. The declaration also created easier avenues for OPS funding and procurement, but Interim Chief Bell stated that OPS did not leverage any of these avenues.

On February 11, the Premier of Ontario declared a province-wide emergency under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)*. Interim Chief Bell stated that the EMCPA declaration and the powers that were granted under the EMCPA did not directly help OPS. However, he stated that they indirectly benefited OPS by allowing OPP to increase vehicle inspections and stop, redirect, and delay protestors travelling on provincial highways towards Ottawa.

Impact of Federal Emergency Declaration

On February 14, the federal government declared a public order emergency under the *Emergencies Act*. Interim Chief Bell stated that the powers granted under the federal emergency declaration were significantly beneficial to OPS in ending the occupation. He did not have an opinion on whether the *Emergencies Act* was necessary to end the occupation. He commented during the interview that, as Interim Chief, he only led OPS in a world that postdated the federal emergency declaration.

Interim Chief Bell stated that the power to establish an exclusion zone was the most important power conferred under the *Emergencies Act*. The weekend influx of protestors and subsequent reduction as the next week began created instability and added to the dynamic and dangerous nature of the situation. By authorizing the creation of an exclusionary zone, the *Emergencies Act* permitted OPS to stop movement in the downtown core and create a stable atmosphere in advance of launching an operation to clear the downtown core. He stated that the exclusion zone permitted OPS to execute that operation slowly, deliberately, intentionally, and safely. Interim Chief Bell stated that OPS did use the *Emergencies Act* power to create the exclusion zone. He stated that, to the extent that other statutory or common law authorities might have authorized the creation of an exclusion zone, the *Emergencies Act* removed any uncertainty because it clearly authorized its creation.



Interim Chief Bell also stated that the power to freeze financial accounts assisted OPS by incentivizing convoy participants to leave voluntarily. He stated that he heard reports that some convoy participants whose accounts were frozen left downtown Ottawa, and that their accounts were then unfrozen. He stated that his opinion was informed by briefings from RCMP, and that he understood that RCMP was exercising the power to freeze financial accounts.

Interim Chief Bell stated that the federal emergency declaration made it easier for OPS to access tow trucks. He stated that OPS experienced challenges in accessing tow trucks before the federal emergency declaration due to active resistance from towing companies. The federal emergency declaration removed those challenges by making clear to towing companies that police could compel them to provide tow trucks and drivers. Interim Chief Bell noted that OPS did not have to compel any tow trucks.

Lessons and Recommendations for the Future

Interim Chief Bell stated that he learned numerous lessons during the Freedom Convoy and has made dramatic changes at OPS. Specifically, he took following steps to implement lessons learned:

- OPS no longer views intelligence on protest activity through the lens of its pre-Freedom Convoy experience, and OPS was well prepared for the Rolling Thunder protest in late April 2022 and protest activity on Canada Day in 2022.
- OPS has a better understanding of the crowd dynamics and unpredictability of Freedom Convoy-affiliated protestors and groups of protestors who oppose federal COVID-19 policies, and it has planned for those protests accordingly.
- OPS recognizes the importance of ensuring that the Event Commander and PLT are kept informed on negotiations with protestors.
- Interim Chief Bell has worked with OPS officers to develop and implement the ICS model and the distinction between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels that it contemplates.
- Superintendent Bernier has regularly discussed lessons learned from the Freedom Convoy with groups of OPS senior officers.

Interim Chief Bell offered several recommendations to improve police ability to respond to future public order events:

- 1) Ensure sustainable funding for the OPS Intelligence Directorate to collect and assess intelligence.
 - As the police of jurisdiction in Canada's capital, OPS has greater intelligence needs than other municipal police departments.
- 2) Grant police clear authority to stop the flow of people and vehicles into an area.
 - Before the federal emergency declaration, OPS lacked clear authority to do so.
- 3) Establish an integrated, standardized set of command models that police across Canada can use going forward.



- There are currently multiple different models (ICS, IMS, and the RCMP's GSB model), and creating a single standard model would eliminate the need to rely on relationships to build command structures.
- 4) Create a mechanism to remove information that is criminal or constitutes misinformation from social media.
- 5) Create a mechanism to intervene in a large online funding initiative where the proceeds are being used to facilitate unlawful protest.
 - OPS had to rely on GoFundMe's goodwill and that it took time for GoFundMe to stop the funding campaign.